

Capital Reading

STATINTL

Noel Field: A Do-Gooder Downed by Abstractions

Reviewed by Tom Ross

Mr. Ross, a Washington correspondent for the Chicago Sun-Times, is co-author of "The Invisible Government," a recent book about the CIA, and author of "The U-2 Affair."

RED PAWN: The Story of Noel Field. By Flora Lewis.
Doubleday. 283 pp. \$4.95.

IN 1949, AT THE HEIGHT OF THE COLD WAR, a tall, soft-featured American expatriate disappeared in Prague. He was Noel Field, a former State Department official and an international doer of good works (no relation, it should prudently be noted, to my publisher, Marshall Field). Within the next year, his wife, brother and foster daughter also slipped behind the Iron Curtain.

Shortly thereafter, Field became the *bete noir* in a wave of purge trials that swept Eastern Europe. He was accused of being an American master spy, and anyone who had crossed his path was subject to extermination as a Titoist enemy of Stalin. He becomes, as the author puts it, a "Typhoid Mary" to the scores of Communists he rescued as a World War II refugee coordinator or set up in postwar Germany through a peculiar relationship with Allen Dulles and the OSS.

Then, with the death of Stalin and the ascendancy of Khrushchev, the Fields were released from their dungeons—the brother and foster daughter returning to the United States, and Noel and his wife remaining voluntarily in shabby Communist gentility in Hungary.

Who was this strange man, condemned in the United States as a Communist traitor, in Russia as an American spy, and in Western Europe as a double agent?

FLORA LEWIS, a distinguished foreign correspondent of The Washing-

ton Post, decided it was important to find out. But the Central Intelligence Agency, like its counterparts in the communist world, "refused to reveal any facts in its possession on the case but the most obvious and well known, long after everyone involved was dead or out of jail; all the related secrets were exposed or harmlessly obsolete; all the dossiers closed for lack of further relevance."

And so, good reporter that she is, Miss Lewis determined to get the story on her own, interviewing hundreds of persons, scouring archives in a dozen countries, "working as a lone intelligence center, almost a Gumshoe detective."

She has done her work well. On one level, "Red Pawn" is a spy thriller; on another, a subtle intellectual history of a prototype figure of the age.

Field, a member of a prominent Quaker family, is pictured as a gentle,



Miss Lewis

bookish man of aching humanitarian instincts. Touched deeply by personal involvement in the Sacco-Vanzetti case and the Spanish Civil War, he gravitated toward the Communists, though the author points out that it is impossible to say with certainty whether he did or did not join the Party.

She shows, however, in chilling detail how Field put himself at the service of the Communist apparatus and how he succeeded not only in betraying his own country but also, unwittingly, those very comrades he sought to serve.

Miss Lewis is extraordinarily generous to this privileged American who excused the Communists for everything, even for his own grim incarceration. But in the end she pierces to the core of his "arrogant humility" and raises a warning to those of his kind who would reject "the demands of common sense and simple human feeling" in devotion to bloody abstractions.